



September 7, 2016

House Local Government Committee
Anderson House Office Building
Post Office Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Committee Members:

I write to you today to ask that you vote **YES** on Senate Bill 239 to eliminate breed specific legislation in Michigan.

I am the Executive Director of Teacher's Pet: Dogs and Kids Learning Together, which is a non-profit that pairs hard-to-adopt rescue dogs with youth in juvenile detention facilities for a 10-week workshop that combines classroom education on responsible pet ownership, humane treatment of animals, positive dog training and canine body language with obedience training of the shelter dogs. During this 10-week session, the youth work with the dogs from Macomb County and Oakland County municipal animal shelters. Over the last 11 years, our kids have worked with more than 2,500 dogs of varied breeds, with a high percentage falling under the "banned breeds" umbrella.

Breed specific legislation has never been effective in reducing dog bites and enhancing public safety. For policymakers specifically, there is a negative consequence because the legislation will not have the results that were promised to constituents. Instead, it wastes constituents' tax dollars. The cost of enforcing breed specific legislation takes away precious resources from other matters of concern to the community.

Breed specific legislation is expensive, time-consuming and nearly impossible to enforce. It takes resources away from protecting the community from truly dangerous animals, including dangerous dogs not belonging to the targeted breeds.

Breed specific legislation discriminates against certain members of the community based on the pet they own. It forces families to relocate to other areas in order to keep their pets, making it difficult for families to stay connected. It discriminates against families on fixed incomes, families with children or senior citizens, and people with disabilities: relocation may not be an option for these families. It breaks up families by forcing law abiding citizens to give up their family pets. They are forced to bring well-behaved family dogs to the shelter where they may be destroyed.

Breed specific legislation has targeted 36 different breeds of dogs – from Chihuahuas to Neapolitan Mastiffs – and countless mixed-breed dogs based on their appearance. Even if your dog is not currently being targeted, it is a slippery slope. Your dog could be the next target.

Breed specific legislation lowers the value of dogs and dog ownership by generating hysteria based on false and unfounded claims about dog behavior. It alienates dog owners from each other and the community. Neighbors turn on each other.

All reckless dog owners should be held accountable for their actions. Reckless owners of dogs that are not included in the targeted breeds should be held equally accountable for their actions.

Please vote in support of Senate Bill 239. Provide fair and equal treatment of all dog owners. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Amy Johnson

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